federal register

Tuesday
December 11, 1979

Part VI

Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Proposed Policy for Federal Land Acquisition/Protection Studies and Recommendations Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program; Public Meetings

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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Proposed Policy for Federal Land Acquisition/Protection Studies and Recommendations Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program; Public Meetings on Proposed Policy Statement

The Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks is proposing to adopt a policy statement concerning land acquisition/protection studies and recommendations. This policy statement is intended to provide general guidance concerning the study of new areas that could result in use of the Federal portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) by the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and USDA—Forest Service. This policy will not address studies or acquisition programs within the boundaries of areas previously authorized by Congress or the Secretary of the Interior.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended, authorizes appropriations for acquisitions of land, waters, or interests in land or waters for certain additions to the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, other areas authorized to be adminsitered by the Secretary of the Interior (Bureau of Land Management) for outdoor recreation purposes, and the National Forest System. Each Federal agency with authority to use LWCF moneys for acquisition currently follows its own policies and procedures in developing studies and recommendations for potential new national areas or major expansions of existing areas. These studies and recommendations are coordinated by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy Group (LPG) which is composed of the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, National Park Service, the Chief of the Forest Service—USDA, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks as chairman. The LPG was established in 1974 to review, comment, and make recommendations on studies and preliminary legislative proposals which may require significant expenditures from the Federal portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The LPG has developed the proposed statement of general policy as recommended by the Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Planning Program to improve administration of the Federal portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

This proposed policy is not intended to replace the more detailed policies and procedures currently guiding each agency's study programs. However, the proposed statement is intended to provide general guidance on what type of areas will be studied, how priorities will be established, and what alternative protection techniques will be considered. The policy also addresses schedules for implementing adopted protection strategies in newly authorized areas.

The Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks requests public participation in the formulation of this policy statement. Therefore, public meetings have been scheduled to receive comments on the proposed policy. Written and oral comments will be compiled, reviewed, and considered by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy Group. The intent is to have a general statement of policy by April 16, 1980.

Statement of policy. The following policy statement will be the basis for comments and discussion:

Policy for Federal Land Acquisition/Protection Studies and Recommendations Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

General. It is the policy of the member agencies of the Land and water Conservation Fund Policy Group (National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in the Department of the Interior and Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture) to identify and develop recommendations to protect, for the use and benefits of present and future generations, those natural, cultural, and recreational resources which exhibit sufficient qualities to merit Federal action.

Studies. Studies of potential new national areas or major expansions of existing areas will be conducted as part of an adopted planning process. Areas eligible for study will be identified by systematic inventories and analytical procedures as having natural, cultural, or recreational qualities of importance to the nation.

Priorities. Priorities for studying potential new areas and formulating budget requests will be determined in light of agency program missions and responsibilities by a combination of relevant criteria which may include:

—Relationship to national goals established by congressional and administrative directives, including the Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan.
—Adequacy of representation in areas already being protected by Federal, State, local, or private action.
—Potential to increase benefits from land already in Federal ownership or from other Federal program expenditures.
—Potential to generate complementary activities by State, local, private, or other Federal agencies.
—Unique, threatened, or outstanding characteristics of the resource.
—Proximity to population concentration and accessibility.
—Price escalation.
—Support or opposition by State and local governments, citizen organizations, individuals, or other interests.
—Relationship to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP) and other adopted plans at the State, local, or regional level.

Alternatives. Protection strategies may involve various types of direct or indirect Federal action. Recommendations concerning the appropriate Federal role in resource protection and management will consider a full range of applicable alternatives including:

—Reliance on State, local, or private initiatives.
—Registration (natural or historic landmarks, etc.).
—Technical and financial assistance.
—Coordination and consistency of existing Federal or federally-assisted programs.
—Implementation of Federal, State, or local regulatory authorities.
—Acquisition of less-than-fee interests.
—Purchase with reserved interests or provisions for leaseback.
—Acquisition of fee-simple interests.

For potential new areas, recommendations to use any individual technique will be based upon an anlysis of alternatives with respect to their ability to protect resource values and meet management objectives, considering long and short term costs as well as benefits.

Implementation. Adopted protection and management strategies for potential new national areas or major expansions of boundaries of existing areas will be implemented as promptly as possible to protect resource values and maintain purchasing power of available funds. Each newly authorized area of major expansion will have a plan for management and development, including a schedule for implementation which identifies primary values to be protected, land to be acquired in fee, and land to be protected through other means.

Meeting Schedule. Public meetings will be held on the following schedule:

January 9, 1980, at 10:00 a.m., Ceremonial Courtroom, U.S. Courthouse, 450 Golden Gate, San Francisco, California.

January 11, 1980, at 10:00 a.m., Geological Survey Lecture Hall, Building 25, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado.

January 15, 1980, at 10:00 a.m., Main Interior Auditorium, Interior Building, 18th and C Streets, NW., Washington, D.C.

Written comment. Written remarks, offered independent of, or in addition to, any oral comments given at the public hearings, will be accepted through January 31, 1980. Comments should be addressed to:

John G. Tkach, Staff Director, Land and Water Conservation Fund Policy Group, Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Tkach at the address given above. Telephone # (202) 343-7665.

Dated: December 5, 1979.

David F. Hales,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

[FR Doc. 79-37624 Filed 12-10-79; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-03-M